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Ruth Baptiste  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Baptiste

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Austin Farm Academy**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 13 and 14 December 2022, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in November 2021.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, including the chief executive officer and the assistant director of education of the multi-academy trust, the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also met with the designated safeguarding lead, the special educational needs coordinator, and subject leaders of English, mathematics and history, visited lessons and met with parents, pupils and staff. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**Austin Farm Academy remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.**

**I am of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers.**

## **The progress made towards the removal of special measures**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, there have been staff changes in relation to key leadership roles. A new headteacher took up post in September 2022 and is continuing to work closely with the executive headteacher, who was interim headteacher at the time of the previous monitoring visit. The special educational needs coordinator has taken on the designated safeguarding lead role.

Leaders continue to work determinedly to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The appointment of a new headteacher has been managed in a way that has led to a seamless transition from the interim arrangements that were in place. Leaders have maintained the momentum for improvement and have built on the effective work already started. Parents continue to be supportive of the school. One commented that, 'The school has made a lot of improvements in the last year' and, 'My children feel listened to and cared for, and their love of learning keeps growing'.

Leaders continue to focus on the core areas of reading, writing and mathematics. Recent developments include the implementation of a new reading strategy as well as the rolling out of a new mathematics scheme across the school. Leaders are not complacent. They know there is further work to do in the development of the curriculum and assessment across wider curriculum subjects. Leaders have plans in place to address these areas for improvement.

Leaders have maintained a focus on prioritising reading. Staff's subject knowledge and ability to teach phonics effectively continues to strengthen. Leaders' regular checks on what pupils know and can do ensure they can target individual needs. Pupils use the strategies they have been taught well to improve their reading. As a result, pupils, including those who may struggle, are provided with the right support to succeed.

A newly implemented reading strategy in key stage 2 is beginning to deepen pupils' understanding across a range of texts. Pupils say they enjoy reading and relish the challenge now in place to stretch their thinking. However, the quality of implementation is inconsistent. As a result, some pupils do not gain a strong level of understanding of the texts they read.

In mathematics, a new scheme has been implemented across the school. The mathematics curriculum is now designed and sequenced to build pupils' knowledge over time. Pupils say they enjoy mathematics. Relevant training has been provided to develop staff subject knowledge. Most staff are clear in the expectations of the new curriculum. However, not all staff model important concepts within mathematics to support pupils learning well enough. Consequently, pupils can become confused. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have gaps in their basic mathematical understanding.

Leaders know there remains significant work to ensure wider curriculum subjects are designed and sequenced coherently. They have started this work by focusing on

developing a logically sequenced curriculum in history. Leaders have begun to identify the important aspects of what they want pupils to know from the early years to Year 6, including provision for pupils with SEND. However, these designs and how teachers will check on what pupils know and remember for subjects across the wider curriculum are in their infancy.

Leaders have made improvements to the curriculum to support pupils' personal development. A sequenced personal, social and health education programme is now in place. Pupils are gaining a better understanding of their role in modern Britain. They value being part of a school council. Pupils feel that their voice is now beginning to be heard. However, their understanding of British values remains underdeveloped. Leaders recognise this and have started to implement strategies to support their understanding.

The leadership of SEND is strengthening. Individual targets for pupils with SEND are now clearer and more precise, ensuring consistency in how provision is designed. Support from the trust is helping staff understand how they can implement strategies for pupils with SEND as part of their teaching. However, the implementation of these plans is in its infancy. Staff do not adapt the curriculum well enough for pupils' precise needs.

The trust continues to provide a governance function. They invest and prioritise a high level of support. They support the strategic direction of travel well. Trust leaders regularly challenge and monitor leaders' plans and impact. They are systematic in their approach. Staff appreciate the high-quality development the trust provides. Morale remains high. Staff understand that changes made to the school are for the benefit of the pupils.

Leaders ensure that appropriate processes are in place to check on the suitability of staff who work at the school. Staff are clear in their role within safeguarding and what to do if they have concerns about a child.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer or equivalent of the Westcountry Schools multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Plymouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Barraclough  
**His Majesty's Inspector**